

REMARKS

STATUS OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-6, 9-12 and 18-21 are pending in the application.

35 U.S.C. § 103:

Claims 1-6 and 9-12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamauchi et al. (U.S. Patent 4,880,175 [hereinafter "Yamauchi"]) in view of Kataoka (U.S. Patent 4,238,084).

Claims 18-21 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the features of the base claim and any interviewing claim (see page 4 of the March 8, 2006 Office Action). Without conceding to the grounds of rejection, independent claims 1, 4, 9 and 11 are hereby amended respectively to include all features of the corresponding claims 18-21, so as to place the application in condition for allowance.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

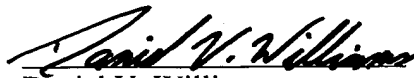
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